



**TOWN OF WESTFORD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

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**Meeting Minutes
Economic Development Committee**

Wednesday, October 10, 2012 at 4:00 PM
Town Hall, Main Conference Room, 2nd Floor
55 Main Street, Westford

Attending: Ron Caterino, Eli Demetri, Andrew Stern, Pertti Vulli, Bill Nussbum, Tom Barry (remotely), Jodi Ross, Angus Jennings.

The meeting was called to order by Bill Nussbum at 4:13 PM. It was noted that the agenda had not been posted within 48 hours of the meeting due to the holiday and, therefore, the Committee was unable to vote on any matters. Consequently, approval of the September 25, 2012 minutes was postponed until the next Committee meeting.

First-Class access:

It appears that all Committee members are now on the first-class system. The Committee will now use the First Class system as the preferential method for Committee communications. Additionally, it was noted that the Committee website is now up and running and business cards have been distributed to all members.

Chris Kluchman briefly attended meeting to discuss plans for the total replacement of the sign bylaw. The sign bylaw working group plans to have an open house in November and will be issuing press releases through all local media. They are asking the Economic Development Committee to provide contact information/mailling list for local businesses for dissemination of information concerning the open house and an online survey. Committee members expressed their willingness to help publicize the event.

Small Business Permitting Guide:

The status of the small business permitting guide that has been under development for a few years was discussed. The Committee has been working with the significant department heads over time and has recently solicited final comments for updates and changes. Tom noted that he had received updates from Bill Turner, Matt Hakala and Rae Dick. Their suggestions have been incorporated into the guide. Additionally, Jodi's welcome letter, praised by all, has been added, along with a reference to the Tech Review group. The applicant information form has been revised into a Word document for easy access and inclusion in the guide. Angus indicated that he will request final feedback of the guide at the next department head meeting. It appeared to all members that the guide is essentially complete and in final draft. The next step will be for the IT department to bring it online. There was some discussion concerning the fee

schedule which is in the guide. All members felt that in order to keep the guide current, once online it should simply hyperlink to the relevant department fee schedules thereby insuring the fee schedules are always accurate. It is anticipated, that the guide will be finalized within the next few weeks.

Business Expo and Showcase:

Four Committee members, along with Jodi, Chris and Angus attended the expo. Bill described the event as a tradeshow that was valuable for Westford to the extent that connections were made and intelligence gathered. Along this line, Bill presented town brochures from Chelmsford and Billerica. The Committee had extensive discussion regarding publishing a similar marketing piece for Westford and whether a regional brochure might also be desirable. Most Committee members felt that the primary focus should be on Westford with the regional concerns only secondary. Angus agreed to undertake investigation into getting cost quotes for a similar Westford brochure. The Committee also discussed ways to defer the cost of producing such a brochure and it was suggested that local businesses be approached to create a gift account that might be tapped, in part, for producing such a brochure. The discussion of the gift account was part of a larger discussion regarding the reconstruction of Route 110 and Minot's corner. At the completion of this work, it will be the town's obligation to pay for beautification and maintenance of sidewalks, plantings and other matters. The idea of the gift account was originally related to these expenses, but might also cover a town brochure. It was pointed out that to the extent such a brochure promotes Westford as a desirable area to work and live, it will help local businesses to attract new hires.

Committee members also noted that one of brochures seem to be funded by advertising. There was a general consensus that the Committee did not desire advertising. However, a business list, such as found in the Billerica brochure, might be a good marketing strategy.

Bill also noted meeting with representatives of SCORE (an organization of retired executives). This organization helps startups in the Northeast region and is sponsored by the Small Business Administration. Ed O'Dell from score indicated to Bill that he would be happy to come to a Committee meeting to inform the Committee as to what score does and how the town might benefit from a relationship with them.

Bill also related information he had learned from the community director of Chelmsford. Apparently, Chelmsford does not view Westford as a competitor because Westford does not have an ETA. This led to a discussion regarding ETA designations. It was Bill's understanding that Chelmsford acquired its ETA designation by originally linking onto Lowell. It then was subsequently able to obtain a separate ETA designation by coming up with 3,000,000 square ft. of occupied and unoccupied developable land. This led to a discussion regarding the statutory and regulatory language that appears to indicate that the 3,000,000 square feet of space must be contiguous however Chelmsford's was not. Andrew related that he had discussions with Littleton's town manager who also believed that Littleton's ETA was likely based on noncontiguous square footage as well.

Angus reviewed the history of the Red Hat TIF, which included research into Westford's ability to apply for an ETA designation. At that time, he had to show the state that Westford could not

qualify for ETA designation under the three million-square-foot requirement as there was not sufficient undeveloped and vacant land in town. Angus did indicate that it might be possible to revisit the analysis in the future. The Committee recognized that ultimately the Board of Selectmen will have to decide on the propriety of an ETA designation for the town and that the best it could do would be to prepare a memo discussing the procedure and options for the board's consideration.

Lastly, Bill related the procedure that Chelmsford had used in developing its promo pieces. It set up three roundtables to solicit views concerning what was good and bad in the town. In their case, these roundtables consisted of (1) brokers, (2) residents and (3) town business leaders. The Committee considered a similar approach for Westford leading to a discussion concerning solicitation of feedback by village rather than some select group of residents. The Committee discussed which villages had organized associations or groups and possible venues. It also discussed that there are a number of matters of relevance to other town Committees pertaining to particular areas of interest for one village or another and that it would be a good idea if these were combined for specific village meetings. After a good deal of discussion about the idea, it was tabled to be placed as an agenda item for a later meeting.

It was noted that the state provides an abandoned building tax credit. There was a question as to whether this might apply to the 12 North situation. Angus indicated he will take a look into it.

Transportation Demand Management:

Andrew briefly discussed the transportation meeting held on September 28 at the tech park. He gave an overview of the transportation issues of interest to the represented local businesses and their expressed desire for sidewalks and lighting to be able to get to 110 plazas. The Committee noted that the current development plans include the desired sidewalks and lighting, but they will become an issue for the town to maintain. See discussion concerning the gift account above.

Business Development Plan:

One of the Committee's charges is to develop a business development plan to present to the Board of Selectmen. The Committee discussed that the most efficacious method of doing this would be to prepare a memo outlining the issues we have been dealing with such as the EDIP, the permit guide, roundtables etc., to present to the Board of Selectmen as this is a business plan.

Status updates:

It was noted that the business database was still a work in progress. Tom mentioned that he had been approached by a couple of business owners who are interested in starting a Westford Business Association which had been previously discussed by the Committee. Tom indicated that he planned to reach out to these business people and to get more information for future discussion.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:50 PM by unanimous consent.

Minutes recorded by: Andrew Stern/ Approved by vote of committee on 10/25/2012